

Rural Forest Program

Forest Monitoring 1997 Annual Report

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**Revised Edition
Contains Corrections to Table 1**



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The King County Comprehensive Plan calls for a monitoring program in the Rural Forest District to evaluate the success of the incentives programs. Similarly, the Cedar River Basin Plan requires monitoring of the forest incentive program in the Lower Cedar River Basin. The King County Department of Natural Resources (KCDNR) is carrying out the monitoring program for both areas. The *Forest Monitoring Baseline Report* (April 1998) describes the monitoring program, the significance of the elements included, and the study areas (Map 1), and presents the baseline conditions as of the end of 1996. Activity in 1997 is reported here, in the first annual monitoring report.

This report documents subdivision activity in the adjusted rural forest district and the Lower Cedar River Basin during 1997. It also reports on participation in the incentive programs in these areas as well as elsewhere in the rural area. Finally, it includes forest practice activity within and outside the study areas.

Most elements of the monitoring program will be reported annually. Because the forest cover analysis is labor-intensive and depends on the availability of new aerial photos and satellite images, forest cover changes will be reported less frequently, and are not included in this report. However, this report augments the baseline forest cover data, by including data unavailable when the baseline was published, for Vashon Island and for County and State Parks within the Rural Forest District. Summary statistics on the size and number of parcels and ownership patterns are not included in this annual report because up-to-date parcel data are not available.

The study areas are shown in Map 1, and described in the baseline monitoring report. They are the adjusted Rural Forest District and the non-urban part of the Lower Cedar River Basin (i.e., those portions of the basin zoned Rural or Forest). Note that the two study areas overlap somewhat: part of the Lower Cedar Basin is Rural Forest District.

Forest Incentive Program Participation

Technical Assistance

KCDNR hired two foresters in August 1997 to provide technical assistance to small forest landowners. They assist landowners with forest management plans, promote the incentive programs, teach classes, and respond to a variety of landowner questions and needs.

During 1997, the foresters assisted landowners with 15 forest management plans on 20 parcels, totaling 215 acres. Two of the properties (20 acres) are in the adjusted district; another two (31 acres) are located in the lower Cedar, outside the adjusted district. The foresters also provided on-site technical assistance to another 23 landowners. Two own land within the adjusted district; an additional three own land within the Lower Cedar, outside the adjusted district.

King County Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES) also hired a forester in 1997 to provide forestry education and increased enforcement of clearing violations in the Cedar River, Issaquah, and East Lake Sammamish basins. In 1997, he assisted numerous property owners with information about the permit system and forest management, and with evaluations of hazard trees.

Education

The education component of the forestry program has been an interdepartmental effort with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Washington State University Cooperative Extension-King County, DDES and KCDNR all participating. The *Forest Advisor* series provides intensive training on forestry topics and requires that the course graduates volunteer their time in forestry education or other forestry projects. The *Forest Stewardship Planning* series coaches landowners through the process of developing their own forest management plans. The *Cedar River Seminars* included sessions on the importance of forestry for protecting the Cedar River ecosystem.

Participation in the education efforts during 1997 is as follows:

- 17 individuals completed the Forest Advisors Training Program;
- 28 individuals completed the Stewardship Planning course;
- 141 individuals attended Cedar River Seminars.

Current Use Taxation

In 1997, staff increased their efforts in publicizing the forest current use taxation programs and the public benefit rating system (PBRs) open space taxation program. In conjunction with WETNET, a local environmental group, they held several workshops to assist landowners in completing their applications. In the second half of the year, staff foresters were available to assist with the required forest management plans. Late in 1997, a new forestry category was added to the PBRs program. This change extends eligibility to many additional small forest landowners because it requires just four acres of forest land to qualify.

Timberlands Program

The Timberlands Program offers property tax reductions for properties that have a forest management plan and are five to twenty acres in size. The application deadline for this program is the end of a calendar year. The applications are approved and recorded during the following year, and the tax benefits begin the year after. This report includes those properties approved and recorded in 1997, as well as the new applications in 1997, which were not recorded until 1998. Typically, a property in the Timberlands Program has some acreage reserved for a home site or agricultural area, and remaining acreage is managed for forestry and enrolled in the program. The acreage figure available for the baseline report and this annual report is the total acreage of each property in the program. The acreage managed as forest and enjoying the tax reduction is usually somewhat smaller.

In 1997, 11 applications were approved on properties totaling 151 acres. Two of these properties, totaling 34 acres, are in the adjusted district. None are within the Lower Cedar River Basin.

A better indication of the results of the recent forestry program efforts is the number of new Timberlands Program applications in 1997. Fifty-one applications, a record number, were submitted. Indications are that 49 of these, totaling 550 acres, will be approved and enrolled in the program. Of these, thirteen properties, totaling approximately 200 acres, are in the rural forest district. Approximately eighty of these acres are properties that were removed from the forestland program (see below), and therefore the acreage in the district new to current use taxation is 120 acres. None of the 1997 applications were for properties in the Lower Cedar River basin.

Forestland Program

The Forestland Program offers a property tax reduction on properties of twenty or more acres primarily devoted to the growing and harvesting of timber. The baseline reported 15,774 acres of Rural Forest District in the Forestland Program. In 1997, 1665 acres of rural forest district were removed from the Forestland program. Of these, 554 acres were acquired by the state or the county, and will continue to be managed forest or open space. Another eighty acres were transferred to the Timber lands program, indicating that the landowner is committed to continue forest management on the property, but has either built a house, or sold off part of the property, so that the forested portion no longer meets the twenty acre minimum. Large forest landowners or development companies own most of the remaining thousand acres removed from the program. The removal from the forestlands program may indicate some future development action; two parcels have “miscellaneous” permits pending at DDES. Approximately 400 of the acres removed from the Forestlands Program are in the Lower Cedar River Basin.

As balance to the removals from the program, approximately 780 acres in the Rural Forest District were added to the Forestland Program in 1997. Of these, 20 acres are in the Lower Cedar River basin.

PBRS

Sixty-six PBRS applications were submitted in 1997. Of these, fifteen are in the Rural Forest District and one is in the Lower Cedar River Basin. Two of the applications used the new forest category.

Forest Land Acquisition

King County purchased two large properties in the adjusted Rural Forest District. Both properties had historically been managed for timber, but had been proposed for residential development. The County’s purchase assures that they will remain in forest management, and that their natural resource and recreation values will be protected.

Taylor Mountain Forest (Map 2) purchased from Manke Timber, is 1700 acres, 1200 acres in the Rural Forest District and 500 acres in the Forest Production District. It is located near Hobart on the headwaters of Carey and Holder Creeks, the major tributaries of Issaquah Creek. Although approximately \$4 million is still owed on the property, the County has title to the entire property and has begun the master planning process. Map 2 shows how Taylor Mountain Forest forms a link between Tiger Mountain and the City of

Seattle Watershed. It buffers the Forest Production District from the existing residential uses to the south. The area to the west is a mix of forests and farms, with considerable participation in the agriculture current use taxation program.

Ring Hill Forest (Map 3) is a forested 320 acre site on the west slope of the Snoqualmie Valley, across from Duvall. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) purchased Ring Hill Estates from Port Blakely with the County's agreement to buy it within 3 years. The County took title to 230 acres in 1997. Port Blakely had intended to develop the property; just prior to selling the property they had received preliminary approval for their plat (see below). Map 3 shows the relationship of Ring Hill Forest to other resource properties. The Rural Forest District properties directly to the south and to the north are in Timberlands and PBRs programs. The valley floor to the east is Agriculture Production District, and is virtually all in agriculture or forest current use taxation. Most of the valley properties are also in the Farmland Preservation Program, with development rights owned by the County. Ring Hill forms an important hillside buffer between the valley and the quickly developing residential area to the west.

Land Use and Permit Activity

Plats

Three plats in the Rural Forest District received preliminary approval in 1997: Ring Hill Estates, Treemont North, and Uplands at Snoqualmie Valley. King County and the Trust for Public Lands (TPL) purchased Ring Hill Estates in 1997, ensuring its continued forest use. Treemont North, located near the Fall City Golf Course, will create 17 new residential lots on 101 acres; the Uplands at Snoqualmie Valley, located south of North Bend and adjacent to the Forest Production District, has been approved for 49 new lots on 494 acres. All three of these plats were vested prior to designation of the rural forest district.

There are two additional vested plats in the Rural Forest District, but neither changed status in 1997. Ames Lake Country Club, vested prior to the designation of the District, is located near Tolt-McDonald Park between Ames Lake and the City of Carnation. The proposal includes 112 lots and a 27-hole golf course on approximately 450 acres. Mystery Meadows, vested in 1996, proposes 7 lots on approximately 35 acres southeast of Maple Valley.

Within the non-urban part of the Lower Cedar River Basin, no plats received preliminary approval during 1997. However, there are two vested plat applications in the basin, Mystery Meadows (discussed above) and the River Ridge at Daybreak. The latter, vested in 1997, is not in the Rural Forest District. It straddles the urban growth line south of Maple Valley. Half the parcel is zoned urban while the other half is rural. This project proposes a 32-lot subdivision on approximately 28 acres; approximately three lots would be created in the rural portion.

Short Plats

Five short plat applications received preliminary approval within the adjusted Rural Forest District. These applications propose to subdivide five parcels into 15 lots on 91 acres. Three of these applications were vested prior to approval of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan.

There are two pending short plat applications in the adjusted district. One application, submitted in December 1997, proposes to divide a 20-acre parcel into four lots; the other application was submitted in 1990, and it proposes to divide a 36-acre parcel into four lots.

In the lower Cedar River Basin, three applications received preliminary approval to subdivide 3 parcels into 8 lots on approximately 22 acres. An additional short plat application is still pending. This application, submitted in July 1997, proposes to create three additional lots on a 54-acre parcel.

Rezones

A proposal to rezone 143 acres within the adjusted district from RA-5 to M was approved. The rezone will allow the expansion of the sand and gravel extraction at the Cadman Black Diamond Mine near State Highway 169 between Black Diamond and the Green River. Part of a large parcel owned by Weyerhaeuser, the site has had a mining land use designation and potential mineral zoning since the 1994 Comprehensive Plan. It had been used for timber production, was recently clear cut, and has been replanted.

Comprehensive Plan Actions

The 1997 Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan included approval of the Polygon Four to One proposal, which affects 830 acres of Rural Forest District, owned by Plum Creek, and historically managed for timber. Map 4 shows the site and its vicinity, most of which is Rural Forest District. One hundred and fifty acres of the district were designated urban. Another 80 acres will be a school site for the Tahoma School District. Six hundred acres will be dedicated to King County as open space. This open space acquisition, combined with the 320 acre Kent watershed, the County-owned Rock Creek Habitat Conservation Area, and areas designated as open space in the Black Diamond agreement, provides a tremendous opportunity for the conservation of a large forested block. Most of the open space in the four to one proposal is in the Cedar River Basin.

Miscellaneous Permits

There are a number of other land use actions which result either in the recognition of lots formerly not recorded, or the segregation of parcels, exempt from the subdivision process. *Separate lot* permits recognize the legal establishment of existing and pre-existing lots of record. These include newly recognized lots being divided by public road right of ways, designated shorelines and other separate lots as described in King County Code (KCC) 19.04.420 A, B, & C. An *innocent purchaser* permit involves lots created in violation of the subdivision code by prior owners, for which limited recognition has been granted for subsequent owners pursuant to KCC 19.08.114. Subdivision exemptions include large lot segregations (division of land into lots that are 20 acres or larger),

testamentary provision, transfer of land to a public body, boundary (lot) line adjustments and others listed in KCC 19.08.010. Table 1 summarizes the miscellaneous permits (except for lot line adjustments, described below) in the Rural Forest District and the Lower Cedar River Basin.

Table 1: 1997 Approved Miscellaneous Applications

Adjusted Rural Forest District				Lower Cedar River Basin (nonurban)			
Type of application	# of applications	# lots recognized in application	Sum of application acreage		# of applications	# lots recognized in application	Sum of application acreage
Separate Lot	26	51	833		7	8	304
Innocent Purchaser					5	7	14
Other Subdivision Exemptions	2	9	139		3	7	540
Total	28	60	972		15	22	858

Lot Line Adjustments (LLA)

Lot line adjustments do not create new lots; however, they can result in new building sites by reconfiguring previously unbuildable parcels. In the adjusted district, there were 12 LLAs approved in 1997. Five additional applications are still under review. Most of the permits were for minor reconfigurations to follow roads, correct survey errors, or similar situations. One of the approved permits and two of the pending permits result in parcel reconfigurations.

There were 11 approved LLAs within the Lower Cedar River Basin during 1997. Five others are pending review. Three of the 11 are major parcel reconfigurations.

Large Lot Segregations

There were no applications for large lot segregations in the adjusted rural forest district or the lower Cedar River Basin during 1997. However, there were numerous applications for segregations in 1995 and 1996, which were reviewed by DDES, but which have not yet been recorded on assessor maps. Because they were not yet mapped, these segregations were not reflected in the baseline, and they are not reflected in the Rural Forest District map in this report (Map 1). Many of the large parcels in the rural forest (still shown as undivided on the map) either have been segregated into twenty-acre parcels or have segregation permits under review.

Forest Practice Applications

Forest practice activity is an indicator of the viability of forestry in the rural area. Class 2, 3, and 4S permits require replanting and indicate continued forest use. Class 4G forest

practices indicate conversions to a nonforest use. Table 2 shows Washington State Forest Practice Applications in 1996 and 1997 in the adjusted district, lower Cedar River basin, and the Forest Production District.

Table 2: Forest Practice Activity in the Adjusted District, Lower Cedar, and FPD

	1996	1997
Acres Harvested (Class 2, 3, 4S)		
Adjusted District	662	761
Lower Cedar River Basin	329	6
Forest Production District	12,915	8892
Miles of Road (Class 2, 3, 4S)		
Adjusted District	11.6	4.5
Lower Cedar River Basin	2.0	<0.1
Forest Production District	80.0	82.9
Acres Converted (Class 4 G)		
Adjusted District	16	0
Lower Cedar River Basin	25	0
Forest Production District	4	58*
No. of Harvest Applications (Class 2, 3, 4S)		
Adjusted District	26	29
Lower Cedar River Basin	9	4
Forest Production District	134	207
No. of Conversion Applications (Class 4 G)		
Adjusted District	3	0
Lower Cedar River Basin	2	0
Forest Production District	1	2*

- These 2 applications converted 58 acres to expand gravel pits.

Forest Cover

The *Forest Monitoring Baseline Report* included a description of forest cover in the adjusted rural forest district and in the rural area. At the time the baseline report was published, data were unavailable for County and State Parks within the rural forest district and for Vashon Island. This section describes the forest cover for these areas, based on the same 1995 satellite image classification used in the baseline report. The results of this classification are presented in Table 3. Sixty-two percent of Vashon Island and 92% of County and State Parks in the district were forested.

The forest cover data reported in the baseline report for the rural area and the rural forest district are affected by the addition of the data for Vashon Island and parks. Vashon Island has slightly lower percent forest cover than the remainder of the rural area. The

Vashon results reduce the percent forest cover for the total rural area approximately 0.5% to 67.2%. The percent forest cover for County and State Parks within the Rural Forest District is slightly greater than the forest cover for the adjusted district. The addition of the Parks data increases the district forest cover approximately 0.4% to 87%.

Table 3: Landcover for Vashon Island and County and State Parks within the Rural Forest District based on Classification of a 1995 Landsat Image.

Vashon Island

<i>Landcover</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>% of Island</i>
Mixed Forest	5,572	23.62%
Deciduous	6,796	28.79%
Conifer-Early	1,042	4.41%
Conifer-Middle	223	.94%
Conifer-Mature	----	-----%
Recently Cleared	232	0.98%
Scrub/shrub	1,064	4.51%
Grass-brown	1,801	7.63%
Grass-green	494	2.09%
Developed Low Intensity	5,101	21.61%
Developed Medium Intensity	522	2.21%
Developed High Intensity	224	0.95%
Bare Ground	160	0.68%
Bare Rock	7	0.03%
Open Water	367	1.55%
Shadow	---	-----%
Total	23,605	100%
<i>Aggregated Forest Cover*</i>	14,697	62.27%

County and State Parks within the Rural Forest District

<i>Landcover</i>	<i>Acres</i>	<i>% of District</i>
Mixed Forest	2,514	54.82%
Deciduous	1,078	23.51%
Conifer-Early	94	2.05%
Conifer-Middle	358	7.81%
Conifer-Mature	27	0.58%
Recently Cleared	3	0.06%
Scrub/shrub	155	3.38%
Grass-brown	10	0.22%
Grass-green	19	0.41%
Developed Low Intensity	230	5.02%
Developed Medium Intensity	14	0.31%
Developed High Intensity	18	0.39%
Bare Ground	11	0.24%
Bare Rock	----	-----%
Open Water	53	1.16%
Shadow	2	0.04%
Total	4,586	100.00%
<i>Aggregated Forest Cover*</i>	4,226	92.15%

*Aggregate Forest Cover includes mixed forest, deciduous, conifer-early, conifer-middle, conifer-mature, and scrub/shrub land cover types.